

Delaware Department of Agriculture First State Agency To Make 1t.org Pledge

DOVER, Del. (March 18, 2021) – The Delaware Department of Agriculture's Forest Service is the first state agency in the United States to make a pledge that supports the 1t.org global goal to conserve, restore, and grow one trillion trees by 2030.

DFS will work with a wide range of partners to secure resources needed to meet the goal of conserving, restoring, and growing one million trees by 2030. DFS plans to support the initiative by utilizing best management practices for forest protection and restoration, conservation of soil and water resources, and increasing the urban tree canopy. Healthy forests are a critical nature-based solution to climate change. Forests in the United States and forest products currently capture almost 15 percent of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels.

"A commitment to protect and enhance Delaware's forests is in the best interest of everyone," said **Delaware State Forester Michael Valenti**. "Community trees and rural forests provide so many natural benefits, but the most valuable of them all is a forest's contribution to a clean and healthier environment."

Encompassing 1.25 million acres, Delaware has nearly 360,000 forested acres. With 78 percent of the state's forests privately owned, the Delaware Forest Service (DFS) recognizes that technical assistance will be vital to achieving the pledge made to the 1t.org U.S. Chapter. The agency employs 22 full-time forest service staff, including professional foresters, conservation technicians, education, communication, and administrative professionals. These experts will provide

technical assistance, funding, and education to serve as the foundation for tree planting, conservation, reforestation, forest management, and wildlife protection throughout Delaware.

“We are continuing our commitment to the State of Delaware by focusing on participating in sustainable forestry and stewardship, restoring forested wetlands and headwater forests, and promoting sound soil and water conservation practices,” said **Urban Forestry Coordinator Kesha Braunskill**. “While planting trees is an important component to increasing our tree canopy, it’s essential for us to protect and maintain the trees we already have. Trees are an important means to combat climate change by benefiting the quality of life and reducing the heat island effects especially in our underserved communities throughout Delaware where climate effects are most impactful.”

DFS also plans to assist new and existing businesses in opening new markets for forest products and increasing forestry professionals within the industry. Research has shown that for every million dollars invested in tree planting and forest restoration activities, 40 new jobs are created, improving Delaware’s local economy.

“States in the U.S. have a vital role to play in reaching the trillion trees goal, given that they are on the frontlines with private landowners and communities,” said **American Forests President and CEO Jad Daley**. “We are thrilled to have Delaware continue its proud ‘first state’ tradition by making the first state-level pledge to the U.S. Chapter of It.org. In addition to demonstrating how states can accelerate efforts to conserve, restore and grow forests, Delaware is contributing vital urban forestry expertise by having Kesha Braunskill of the Delaware Forest Service on the chapter’s U.S. Stakeholder Council.”

The It.org U.S. Chapter, led by American Forests and World

Economic Forum, was created in August 2020, shortly after the Forum launched its global 1t.org initiative. The chapter is championing a new approach in the U.S. to creating healthy and resilient forests. Central to this approach is a diverse group of government agencies, non-profit organizations, corporations, and others who facilitate knowledge exchange, surface new collaboration opportunities, and unlock the full potential needed to accelerate and scale-up forests-related ambitions and actions. There is no other means in the U.S. for bringing together organizations that have made commitments related to forests to learn from each other and help each other achieve their goals.

To learn more about the pledge made to the U.S. Chapter of 1t.org by the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Delaware Forest Service, visit <https://us.1t.org/pledge/delaware-forest-service-one-million-trees-2020-2030>.

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